

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An authentication system, comprising:

5 a number of authentication agents, each of the authentication agents authenticating at least one user parameter by performing at least one authentication task; and

an authentication manager that requests each of the authentication agents to authenticate an unauthenticated user parameter.

10 2. The authentication system of claim 1, wherein the authentication manager waits for a response from each of the authentication agents, each response indicating whether the unauthenticated user parameter has been authenticated.

15 3. The authentication system of claim 1, comprising:

an external authentication service; and

20 wherein at least one of the authentication agents calls upon the external authentication service to authenticate the unauthenticated user parameter.

25 4. The authentication system of claim 1, further comprising a parameter type associated with each of the authentication agents, wherein each of the authentication agents authenticates the unauthenticated user parameter if the unauthenticated user parameter is of the parameter type associated with the respective authentication agent.

5. The authentication system of claim 4, wherein:

each of the authentication agents transmits an invalid response to the authentication manager upon a failure to authenticate the unauthenticated user parameter;

5 each of the authentication agents transmits a valid response to the authentication manager upon a successful authentication of the unauthenticated user parameter; and

10 each of the authentication agents transmits a valid response to the authentication manager if the unauthenticated user parameter is of a parameter type that is different than the parameter type associated with the respective authentication agent.

6. The authentication system of claim 1, wherein:

each of the authentication agents transmits an invalid response to the authentication manager upon a failure to authenticate the unauthenticated user parameter; and

20 each of the authentication agents transmits a valid response to the authentication manager if the unauthenticated user parameter is successfully authenticated.

7. The authentication system of claim 1, wherein the authentication manager discovers the authentication agents.

8. The authentication system of claim 7, wherein the authentication manager generates a lookup table listing each of the authentication agents that are discovered.

9. An authentication method, comprising:  
providing for a number of authentication agents, each of the  
authentication agents being configured to perform at least one authentication task;  
requesting each of the authentication agents to authenticate an  
5 unauthenticated user parameter; and  
obtaining a response from each of the authentication agents  
indicating whether the unauthenticated user parameter has been authenticated.

10 10. The authentication method of claim 9, comprising requesting an  
external authentication service to authenticate the at least one user parameter.

11. The authentication method of claim 9, further comprising associating  
a parameter type with each of the authentication agents, wherein each of the  
authentication agents authenticates only those unauthenticated user parameters  
that are of a parameter type that is associated with the respective authentication  
agent.

12. The authentication method of claim 11, wherein:  
transmitting an invalid response to an authentication manager upon a  
failure to authenticate a respective user parameter;  
transmitting a valid response to the authentication manager upon a  
25 successful authentication of the unauthenticated user parameter; and  
transmitting the valid response to the authentication manager if the  
unauthenticated parameter is of a parameter type that is different than the  
parameter type associated with the respective authentication agent.

13. The authentication method of claim 9, further comprising:  
transmitting an invalid response to the authentication manager upon a  
failure to authenticate the unauthenticated user parameter; and  
transmitting a valid response to the authentication manager if the  
5 unauthenticated user parameter is successfully authenticated.

14. The authentication method of claim 9, further comprising the step of  
discovering the authentication agents.

15. The authentication method of claim 14, further comprising generating  
a lookup table listing each of the authentication agents that are discovered.

16. A computer program embodied on a computer readable medium for  
performing authentication, comprising:  
code that embodies a number of authentication agents, each of the  
authentication agents authenticating at least one user parameter by performing at  
least one authentication task; and  
code that embodies an authentication manager that requests each of  
the authentication agents to authenticate an unauthenticated user parameter.

17. The computer program embodied on a computer readable medium of  
claim 16, wherein the authentication manager further comprises code that waits for  
a response from each of the authentication agents, each response indicating  
whether the unauthenticated user parameter has been authenticated.

18. The computer program embodied on a computer readable medium of claim 16, wherein at least one of the authentication agents further comprises code that calls upon an external authentication service to authenticate the unauthenticated user parameter.

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19. The computer program embodied on a computer readable medium of claim 16, further comprising code that embodies a parameter type associated with each of the authentication agents, wherein each of the authentication agents authenticates the unauthenticated user parameter if the unauthenticated user parameter is of the parameter type associated with the respective authentication agent.

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20. The computer program embodied on a computer readable medium of claim 19, wherein each of the authentication agents further comprises  
code that transmits an invalid response to the authentication manager upon a failure to authenticate the unauthenticated user parameter;  
code that transmits a valid response to the authentication manager upon a successful authentication of the unauthenticated user parameter; and  
code that transmits a valid response to the authentication manager if the unauthenticated user parameter is of a parameter type that is different than the parameter type associated with the respective authentication agent.

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21. The computer program embodied on a computer readable medium of claim 16, wherein each of the authentication agents further comprise:

code that transmits an invalid response to the authentication manager upon a failure to authenticate the unauthenticated user parameter; and

code that transmits a valid response to the authentication manager if the unauthenticated user parameter is successfully authenticated.

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22. The computer program embodied on a computer readable medium of claim 16, wherein the authentication manager further comprises code that discovers the authentication agents.

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23. The computer program embodied on a computer readable medium of claim 22, wherein the authentication manager further comprises code that generates a lookup table listing each of the authentication agents that are discovered.

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